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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the relationship between the level of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) by 14 second-grade teachers and the construction of self-concept of children in their classrooms. Teachers were given the Primary Teacher Questionnaire, a beliefs scale that assesses the level of endorsement of DAP, and were classified as having a higher or lower endorsement of DAP. Four children were randomly selected from each of the 14 classrooms and given the Self Description Questionnaire I, a multidimensional measure of self-concept in children ages 5 to 8 years. Results indicated that children in classrooms of teachers who had a high level of endorsement had higher academic self-confidence scores than children in classrooms of teachers with low levels of endorsement. The study also found that teachers who had been teaching for longer periods of time had lower levels of endorsement of DAP than those with less teaching experience. (A copy of the Primary Teacher Questionnaire is appended. Contains 41 references.) (Author/MDM)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL SELF-CONCEPT IN SECOND GRADE CHILDREN AND THE LEVEL OF TEACHER ENDORSEMENT OF DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Teacher Education

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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Abstract

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL SELF-CONCEPT IN SECOND GRADE CHILDREN AND THE LEVEL OF TEACHER ENDORSEMENT OF DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

The relationship between level of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice of 14 second grade teachers and the construction of self-concept of children in their classrooms was examined. Teachers were given The Primary Teacher Questionnaire, a beliefs scale that assesses level of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice, and classified as having a higher or lower endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice. Four children, two boys and two girls, were randomly selected from each of the 14 classrooms and were given The Self Description Questionnaire I, a multidimensional measure of self-concept of children ages 5 to 8 years of age, in November and again in April.

Three-way analyses of variance were run to examine the effect of level of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice on starting self-concept scores (average of academic and nonacademic scores assessed in November), nonacademic self-concept scores assessed in April, and academic self-concept scores assessed in April. Results indicated a

significant effect of level of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice on academic self-concept scores. Children in classrooms of teachers who had a higher level of endorsement had higher academic self-concept scores.

An intercorrelation matrix was also run on the scores on the Self Description Questionnaire I with several teacher demographic variables. The analyses showed that level of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice was negatively correlated with total number of years teaching and number of years teaching in second grade. Teachers who had been teaching for longer periods of time had lower levels of endorsements of developmentally appropriate practice.

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To my family who wondered if I'd ever get done with "The Paper", I say thanks for your patience and support!

Laura Croom

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Chapter One: The Problem

Introduction and Background

In the field of early childhood education much discussion centers around the topic of developmentally appropriate practice and how such practice serves in the development of the whole child. Educators appear to be refocusing on what children should be doing rather than on what children can be doing. Young children can spend a great deal of time completing worksheets, reading flashcards, and counting by rote. But do these behaviors reflect what is known about young children and how they learn and develop? According to Katz (1988) children should be doing those things which best support and nurture their development.

The learning environment of young children influences the development of children in all domains including the physical, the social, the emotional, and the cognitive domains. Further, research supports that the environment influences the development of self-concept. Does a relationship exist between level of teacher beliefs in various types of learning environments and the construction of self-concept in young children? Further, how does a teacher's endorsement of a learning environment which supports the development of young children through appropriate practices affect the construction of self-concept of young children in his or her classroom?

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate self-

concept of young children who were in learning environments where teachers endorsed developmentally appropriate practices. Because self-concept is personally constructed as a result of interactions with the environment (Beane, 1991), this study investigated how level of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practices by teachers, creators of the educational environment, related to the construction of self-concept by children in their classrooms.

Importance of the Study

The information obtained from this study may help early childhood educators better understand and appreciate the importance of the learning environment as it relates to the construct of a child's self-concept.

Definition of Terms

Self-concept. Self-concept is defined as a descriptive perception of self (Beane & Lipka, 1980). This description of self is multifaceted and includes the areas of nonacademic self-concept, academic self-concept, and total self-concept.

Nonacademic self concept. Nonacademic self concept refers to one's perception of self in relationship to physical ability, physical appearance, peer relationships, and parent relationships.

Academic self-concept. Academic self-concept refers to one's perception of self in relationship to reading, mathematics, and general school ability.

Total self-concept. Total self-concept refers to one's perception of self in relationship to all dimensions of self-concept.

Starting self-concept. Starting self-concept refers to the total self-concept of the subjects in the present study assessed at the onset of the study.

Developmentally appropriate practices. Developmentally appropriate practice refers to appropriate educational practice using the concepts of age appropriateness as well as individual appropriateness. According to the guidelines published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1987), the environment allows for active exploration, concrete experiences, and many opportunities for children to make choices. Children's learning is motivated by their individual curiosities and desires and is assessed through authentic, real-life situations (Bredekamp, 1987).

Developmentally appropriate environment. A developmentally appropriate environment refers to an educational environment which integrates the components of developmentally appropriate practice.

Sex differences. Sex differences refers to the gender of the child as being either male or female.

Research Questions

In the present study the following questions were proposed to examine total self-concept in young children:

1.a. Does classroom type (based on teacher beliefs about developmentally appropriate practice) have an effect on total self-concept?

1.b. Does sex have an effect on total self-concept?

1.c. Does starting self-concept have an effect on total self-concept?

The following questions were proposed to examine non-academic self-concept in young children:

2.a. Does classroom type have an effect on non-academic self-concept?

2.b. Does sex have an effect on non-academic self-concept?

2.c. Does starting self-concept have an effect on non-academic self-concept?

The following questions were proposed to examine academic self-concept in young children:

3.a. Does classroom type have an effect on academic self-concept?

3.b. Does sex have an effect on academic self-concept?

3.c. Does starting self-concept have an effect on academic self-concept?

Limitations

The results of this study will be descriptive of second graders in the Westside Community School District. Because of the small size of the sample generalizations to other populations may not be easily made. Implications may, however, be drawn for other districts whose demographics are similiar to those of the sample.

Internal validity. Internal validity was addressed in several ways. Within each classroom children were randomly selected for the study. Because all children were the same age at the beginning of the study it was expected that their maturational and developmental experience would be smiliar.

All children were interviewed by educational aides from

their individual schools. There may be some question as to the validity of the children's responses because the interviewer was a non-neutral person. However, because the interviewer was a familiar person it was thought the children would be more comfortable with the interview process itself and there would be less fluctuation in responses due to the discomfort level of the children.

It was important for the children to be in a comfortable setting when the interviews were conducted. Therefore, the initial interview was not done until November when the children were very familiar with their surroundings including the physical environment, the adults, and peers present in it. Children were interviewed individually in a private location in the school building to assure the confidentiality of their responses.

External validity. Teacher responses were voluntary and all second grade teachers (with the exception of those teachers who were team teaching) were asked to participate. Therefore, these participating teachers are not representative of a particular group. The questionnaire completed by the teachers was self-reporting; thus, responses reflected the degree to which the teachers agreed with beliefs presented in the questionnaire based on their personal responses. Much research supports the idea that the beliefs of teachers of young children are related to teacher practices and effectiveness in the educational environment (Charlesworth et al, 1990; Feeney & Chun, 1985; Kagan & Smith, 1988; Spodek, 1987; Spodek, 1988; Wing, 1989).

Therefore, teacher beliefs were assumed to be congruent with classroom practices.

Summary

The learning environment of young children impacts the development of children including the inner construct of self-concept. The present study investigated the relationship between level of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice by second grade teachers and the construction of self-concept by children in their classrooms. A review of related literature in this area will follow.

Chapter Two: The Review of the Related Literature

Chapter Two will review literature and research dealing with self-concept and educational learning environments. The review will be organized by focusing on self-concept as a construct which is multidimensional. Sex differences and their relationship to self-concept will follow. The final section will deal with the school environment and its relationship to the construction of self-concept. In this final section the literature will focus on a developmentally appropriate learning environment.

Self-Concept As a Construct

Self-concept has been the focus of much research. One idea found throughout many of the studies is that self-concept develops (Beane,1991; Berne, 1988; Entwisle et al.,1987; Marshall, 1989). It is personally constructed as a result of interactions with the environment (Beane, 1991). Environment is seen as an all inclusive entity involving social, emotional, and physical components that has the power to influence the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children (Bredekamp, 1987). The theory of constructivism states that children do not acquire knowledge by internalizing it directly from their environment but by constructing it from the inside through interaction with the environment (Kamii, Manning, & Manning, 1991). Beane (1991) states, "It is clear that people do not learn about themselves either apart from or prior to learning about their world. Rather, they learn about both simultaneously

and in light of their interdependence" (p. 29). Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) agree that self-concept is formed through experience with and interpretations of one's environment. In short, self-concept is an internal, developmental structure influenced by one's environment.

Problems Of Definition

Throughout the literature there arises a problem of definition concerning self-concept and self-esteem. Some researchers use the constructs of self-concept and self-esteem interchangeably (Beane, 1991; Harter & Pike, 1984). Others offer a theoretical distinction between the constructs by defining self-concept as a descriptive perception of self while self-esteem is defined as a valuative assessment of those descriptions (Beane & Lipka, 1980). Lawrence (1981) describes self-esteem as being an aspect of self-concept while Coppersmith (1967) defines self-esteem as the way a child evaluates her self-concept. Shavelson et al., (1976) broadly define self-concept as a person's perceptions regarding himself or herself. The problem which Byrne (1984) noted nine years ago is still present today: no clear, concise, universally accepted definition of self-concept appears to exist. Therefore, this review of the literature uses the exact terms used by the researchers.

Multidimensionality Of Self-Concept

Contrary to the view that self-concept is a singular, global construct, Marshall (1989) states that as a child develops, the self-concept differentiates into multiple domains. Shavelson et al. (1976) use the term multifaceted

to describe this feature of self-concept. These facets, categories, or components include such areas as physical, emotional, social, and academic self-concept. Much support for the multidimensionality of self-concept is found throughout the research (Byrne, 1884; Delugach, Bracken, Bracken, & Schicke, 1992; Marsh & Gouvernet, 1989; Shavelson & Bolus, 1982). Harter and Pike (1984) assessed four domains in young children ages 4-7: cognitive competence, physical competence, peer acceptance, and maternal acceptance. The Joseph Pre-School and Primary Self-Concept Screening Test (Gray, 1986) was built on a five-dimension model of self-concept including significance (the perception of how others value the child), competence (how able the child feels he/she can master challenges faced day by day), power (perception of how the child controls events around him/her), general evaluative contentment (satisfaction with the child's world as it exists), and virtue (the child's perception of being a "moral" person). Marsh et al. (1991) found young children (5 to 8 years of age) were able to differentiate among 8 dimensions of self-concept: physical ability, physical appearance, peer relationships, parent relationships, reading, mathematics, general school, general self. The results of this study involving 501 children showed that self-concept is much better differentiated by this age group than had previously been assumed. Marsh and Shavelson (1985) concluded that ignoring the multidimensionality of self-concept results in an inadequate understanding of the construct. Children do not view themselves as equally

adequate in all areas or domains; by age 8, children are capable of making meaningful distinctions between different domains (Harter & Pike, 1984).

Sex Differences and Self-Concept

The effect of sex on self-concept has been examined by some researchers. In 1979 Wylie reviewed research prior to that year and concluded there was no real evidence for sex differences in one's overall or global self-concept but research dealing with sex differences and specific components of self-concept was needed. Meece et al. (1979) focused their research on math self-concept and found their data suggested there was little sex difference in primary-aged children but by the junior high and senior high years girls appeared to have lower self-concepts in the area of math. A study by Marsh, Relich and Smith (1983) looked at several dimensions of self-concept with fifth grade students and found girls had higher self-concepts in reading and general school and lower self-concepts in physical abilities, math, and physical appearances. In 1984 Marsh replicated the 1983 study using subjects from grades 2 through 5 and found the two largest sex effects were for physical abilities (favoring males) and reading (favoring females). Marsh concluded following both studies that "the size of the sex effects across all areas of self-concept...is very small" (p.11) and were lost when a total score from the sum of all responses was determined.

Few studies have focused specifically on young children and the effect of sex on construction of self-concept. In his

1985 study with kindergarteners Burns found no sex differences in relation to self-concept. In a study with young children 5 to 8 years of age, Marsh, Craven, and Debus (1991) found that sex differences appeared to be consistent with sex stereotypes. The effect of sex was statistically significant for three dimensions of self-concept. Girls had substantially lower self-concepts in physical ability and higher self-concepts in physical appearance and reading. However, when the effects of sex were assessed for three total scores of academic self-concept, nonacademic self-concept, and general self-concept no statistical significance was found. Research seems to support the idea that while sex differences may affect some dimensions of self-concept these differences are lost when these dimensions are combined to form a global self-concept.

School Environment and Self-Concept

Classroom types. During the primary school years the child's self-concept crystalizes (Stenner & Katzenmeyer, 1976). A school environment has the power to either enhance or debilitate a child's perception of self (Beane, 1991). Studies comparing the effects of "unidimensional" classrooms with those of "multidimensional" classrooms on children's self-concepts bore this out (Rosenholtz and Rosenholtz, 1981; Stipek & Daniels, 1988). A unidimensional classroom was described as one where students were generally all working on the same tasks, groupings were ability based, and abilities emphasized were of a very narrow range (e.g., reading ability was valued to the neglect of artistic ability).

Multidimensional classrooms were characterized by different students working on a variety of tasks simultaneously as multiple dimensions of ability were emphasized. Children's perceptions of their abilities were higher in multidimensional classrooms. While these studies focused on only one dimension of self-concept the results still lend support to the importance of environment as it relates to the construction of self-concept.

Developmentally appropriate environment. "A child creates and re-creates reality out of his or her experiences with the environment" (Elkind, 1989, p. 89). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has issued a position statement derived from current theory, research, and practice which recognizes the need for an environment, including curriculum, instructional methods, and materials, that is developmentally appropriate for children ages 5 through 8 years of age (Bredekamp, 1987). Such an environment should be safe, nurturing, and should promote the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of the child.

Bredekamp (1987) states that major components of a developmentally appropriate program are a teacher's working knowledge of child development and the application of such knowledge throughout the particular program. Knowledge of typical development within an age span, as well as knowledge of individual patterns and timing of growth, personality, learning style, and family background are fundamental dimensions of developmental appropriateness (Bredekamp,

1987).

Teachers in a developmentally appropriate environment view young children as whole beings whose domains of development--physical, social, emotional, and cognitive--are integrated. Because young children construct knowledge from experience, the environment needs to allow for much interaction with developmentally appropriate materials, peers, and adults in relevant and meaningful ways. Age-appropriate as well as individually-appropriate expectations should permeate the learning environment. "When expectations exceed children's capabilities and children are pressured to acquire skills too far beyond their ability, their motivation to learn as well as their self-esteem may be impaired" (Bredekamp, 1987, p.65). Failure to succeed in school can be a factor in the construction of a negative self-concept.

Impact of school environment on self-concept. Stenner and Katzenmeyer (1976) stressed the importance of educators examining the practices and innovations of education with respect to their effect on academic development and their contribution to the development of self-concept. They further challenged the schools to recognize their opportunities to help develop positive self-concepts in children, thus providing a lifelong asset. Piaget (cited in Elkind, 1989) sees the principal goal of education as being the creation of individuals who are capable both in thought and practice of doing new things--not merely accepting everything that is offered. Beane (1991) states, "In the balance of interactions between the individual and the

environment out of which self-esteem grows, the environment is almost inevitably more powerful. If we want to enhance self-esteem, we must first check to see whether the social environment is safe for the individual" (p.27). Katz (1989) concludes, "children are limited to situations adults provide for them. They have few skills or resources for avoiding situations in which their self-assurance will be threatened" (p.8). Stipek and MacIver (1989) suggest that the decline in perceived competence of students during the elementary school years may be caused in part by changes in the educational environment. Every facet of the educational environment can have an effect on the developing construct of self-concept.

Humphrey (1989) states, "Young children usually feel 'I am what I can do'" (p.20). The challenge for the classroom teacher is to establish that educational environment which fosters the child's potential (Sheridan, 1991). The environment should allow for and support individual differences while allowing the child to experience appropriate control in making choices and participating in activities. Stipek and MacIver (1989) concluded from their review of the research that children change the way they evaluate themselves as they interact with their environment. Clearly, research supports the importance of the environment as it relates to the constructs of self-concept and self-esteem. In the words of Beane (1991), "Because environment powerfully informs their self-perceptions, insisting that young people are responsible for their own self-esteem is blatantly unjust" (p.27). The nation's largest organization

of early childhood educators, The National Association for the Education of Young Children, challenges teachers to take optimum advantage of the child's natural abilities, interests, and enthusiasm for learning by creating and supporting a developmentally appropriate environment wherein the "child-by-environment interaction" will positively relate to the construction of self-concept (Bredekamp, 1987).

Summary

Research supports that self-concept is constructed as an individual interacts with his/her environment. Self-concept is a multidimensional construct and by age 8 children are able to make distinctions between the different dimensions of self-concept.

A small body of evidence dealing with sex differences in young children in relationship to self-concept supports differences in specific dimensions of self-concept. These differences appear to be lost when responses are summed to form a total score for self-concept.

Studies have shown that the environment has an important relationship to the construction of self-concept. A school environment may either enhance or debilitate a child's self-concept. A developmentally appropriate learning environment nurtures and promotes the development of the whole child. An investigation which focuses on the relationship of teacher endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice in the learning environment and the construction of self-concept in young children is indicated.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Procedures

Introduction

This chapter will describe the methodology and procedures used. Data was collected from teachers through a questionnaire and from students through personal interviews. The study describes how young children in the sample perceive themselves and how that perception is related to the beliefs of their classroom teachers concerning developmentally appropriate practice.

Subjects

Two females and two males were randomly selected from each of 16 second grade classrooms in District 66 in Omaha, Nebraska. Each of the 16 classrooms had only one teacher, all of whom happened to be female, responsible for the learning environment; classrooms described as having a team-teaching approach were not included in the study. Students who had been identified as having special needs and were currently enrolled as special education students were excluded from the study. Final inclusion in the study was determined by parental permission. Fifty-nine students were to be interviewed but due to lack of teacher cooperation in two classrooms eight students were unable to participate. A total of 51 second grade students (28 females and 23 males) from 14 classrooms participated in the study. The subjects came primarily from middle class families.

Instruments

The Self Description Questionnaire. The Self

Description Questionnaire I (SDQ-I) (Marsh, 1990) was used to assess three areas of academic self-concept (reading, mathematics, and general school self-concept), four areas of nonacademic self-concept (physical ability, physical appearance, peer relationships, and parent relatonships self-concept), and general self self-concept. Based on the Shavelson et al. (1976) model, which views self-concept as a multifaceted and hierarchical construct, the 8-scale SDQ-I can also be used to measure an academic self-concept (the average of the Reading, Mathematics, and General School self-concept scales), a nonacademic self-concept (the average of the Physical Ability, Physical Appearance, Peer Relationships, and Parent Relationships self-concept scales), and a total self-concept (the average of the Academic and Nonacademic scales).

The SDQ-I is a 76-item interview. Children are asked to respond to simple declarative statements (e.g., "I'm good at reading."; "I make friends easily.") with one of five responses: yes always, yes sometimes, sometimes yes/sometimes no, no sometimes, no always. Eight positively worded items are included for each of the eight SDQ-I scales. In order to disrupt positive response biases, i.e., the tendency of children to use the positive end of the response scale independent of the item content, an additional 12 negatively worded items are included in the interview. However, because research has shown young children do not give valid responses to negatively worded items (Marsh, 1990) the items are not included in the self-concept scores.

The Primary Teacher Questionnaire. The Primary Teacher Questionnaire (PTQ) (Smith, in press) was completed by the subjects' classroom teachers to determine to what degree they endorsed developmentally appropriate practices in the learning environment. Research supports the idea that beliefs are at the core of actions (Sigel, 1987); therefore, teacher beliefs were used to determine to what degree developmentally appropriate practices were implemented in individual classrooms. The PTQ is a teacher beliefs scale based on the "NAEYC Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in the Primary Grades Serving 5-Through 8-Year-Olds" (Bredekamp, 1987). Within the PTQ are two separate scales: the developmentally-oriented scale (DAP) and the traditionally-oriented scale (TRAD). The 18 items making up the DAP scale are statements of appropriate practice. Likewise, the 24 statements of the TRAD scale describe inappropriate or traditional practice. The statements on the two scales do not represent opposite beliefs but rather conceptual differences ,"one more developmentally based than the other" (Smith, in press, p.6). Items from both scales were randomly combined resulting in a 42-item questionnaire. Teachers responded to the positive statements with one of four responses: "strongly disagree", "somewhat disagree", "somewhat agree", "strongly agree".

Procedure

The SDQ-I was administered to subjects as an individual interview. The interviewers were teacher aides from the subjects' schools. Because no special administration

training was required (Marsh, 1990), instructions for the interview process were included directly on the SDQ-I interview forms. Subjects were interviewed during the regular school day in a private setting within the school to assure the confidentiality of responses. Interviews began with a brief set of instructions followed by four sample items. The interviewer would read a statement and ask the the child to verbally respond with one of the five responses. Children were encouraged to state any confusion or uncertainity concerning statements read to them. Interviewers were instructed to explain further and/or paraphrase statements unclear to the subjects throughout the interview. For most children the entire interview took approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

The initial interviews were completed in November, allowing subjects ample time to become familiar with their learning environments including routines, responsibilities, roles, expectations, materials, and relationships with both peers and adults. A second interview was completed in April, again using the SDQ-I, and following the identical procedures of the November interview.

The Primary Teacher Questionnaires were sent to teachers during the last week of November. Instructions were included in the questionnaires and teachers were to complete the questionnaires and return them prior to December 23, 1992.

Variables

Independent variables included classroom type which was

described as either developmentally appropriate or less developmentally appropriate, starting self-concept score, and sex of child. Dependent variables included academic self-concept score, nonacademic self-concept score, and total self-concept score as assessed by The Self Description Questionnaire I.

Definition of Independent Variables

Classroom type was determined using total scores from The Primary Teacher Questionnaire. This total score represented "a composite of the level of endorsement of the developmentally appropriate practices plus the level of rejection of the inappropriate practices" (Smith, in press, p.12). The total scores of the 14 teachers were put on a continuum and the median score computed. Two groups were formed on a median split. The seven teachers whose scores fell below the median were defined as Group 1 which represented those teachers having lower levels of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice. The seven teachers whose scores fell at or above the median score were defined as Group 2 and represented those teachers with higher levels of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice. This study will refer to this variable as DAPLEVEL with two levels, Group 1 and Group 2, as explained above.

Starting self-concept was the total self-concept score (average of Academic and Nonacademic scales) assessed by the November administration of The Self Description Questionnaire I. In this study starting self-concept will be referred to as STARTSC.

Definition of Dependent Variables

Academic self-concept, nonacademic self-concept and total self-concept were measured in both November and April. To distinguish among variables from the two different times of measurement variable names referring to scores from the November interview end in the numeral '1', while variable names referring to scores from the April interview end in the numeral '2', e.g., ACADEM1 vs. ACADEM2.

Academic self-concept was determined by averaging the Reading, Mathematics, and General School self-concept scales as assessed by The Self Description Questionnaire I administered in April. Nonacademic self-concept was determined by averaging the Physical Ability, Physical Appearance, Peer Relationships, and Parent Relationships self-concept scales assessed in April. Total self-concept was determined by averaging the Academic and Nonacademic scales assessed in April. These three variables will be referred to as the following, respectively: Academic Self-Concept (ACADEM2), Nonacademic Self-Consept (NONACAD2). Total Self-Concept (TOTAL2).

Data Analysis

All data analysis was performed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, (SPSS-X user guide 3rd ed.), Chicago: SPSS, Inc., 1988) on the University of Nebraska at Omaha VAX mainframe computer. The SPSS-X programs T-TESTS, CORRELATION, and ANOVA were used for data analysis. The research questions found in Chapter 1 were addressed as

follows:

1. Questions concerning the effects of classroom type (DAPLEVEL), sex, and starting self-concept (STARTSC) on total self-concept (TOTAL2) were addressed using a three-way analysis of variance.

2. Questions concerning the effects of classroom type (DAPLEVEL), sex, and starting self-concept (STARTSC) on nonacademic self-concept (NONACAD2) were addressed using a three-way analysis of variance.

3. Questions concerning the effects of classroom type (DAPLEVEL), sex, and starting self-concept (STARTSC) on academic self-concept (ACADEM2) were addressed using a three-way analysis of variance.

Additional possible relationships among demographic variables and dependent variables were examined through an intercorrelational matrix.

Classroom Equivalency

T-tests were used to establish that prior to the study, children in all classrooms showed no significant differences in starting self-concept (STARTSC), starting nonacademic self-concept (NONACAD1), and starting academic self-concept (ACADEM1). The results of the t-tests indicated that in the total sample of second grade students in the study there were no systematic differences in any measured aspect of self-concept (STARTSC: $t(49)=-0.44$, $p=.662$; NONACAD1: $t(49)=.82$, $p=.418$; ACADEM1: $t(49)= 1.13$, $p=.263$). Therefore, it was assumed that initially there were no systematic differences in any relevant dimensions of self-concept within the study's

sample of second grade children. Thus, later measured differences in self-concept could more clearly be attributed to differences in classroom type which was determined by the teachers' differing levels of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice.

Chapter 4: Results

Results of Analyses of Variance

A 3-way analysis of variance was performed on total self-concept scores (TOTAL2) with classroom type (DAPLEVEL), SEX, and STARTSC scores as factors to address the research questions 1.a., 1.b., and 1.c.

1.a. Does classroom type (based on teacher beliefs about developmentally appropriate practice) have an effect on total self-concept? Results indicated there was no significant DAPLEVEL effect ($F = 1.856$, $p = .180$) on TOTAL2. (See Table I.)

1.b. Does sex of the child have an effect on total self-concept? Results indicated there was no significant SEX effect ($F = .461$, $p = .501$) on TOTAL2. A nearly significant DAPLEVEL X SEX interaction effect ($F = 3{,}524$, $p = ,067$) on TOTAL2 was indicated. (See Table I.)

1.c. Does starting self-concept have an effect on total self-concept? Results indicated a significant STARTSC effect ($F = 20.819$, $p < .001$) on TOTAL2. (See Table I.)

A 3-way analysis of variance was performed on NONACAD2 scores with DAPLEVEL, SEX, and STARTSC scores as factors to address the research questions 2.a., 2.b., and 2.c.

2.a. Does classroom type have an effect on non-academic self-concept? Results indicated there was no significant DAPLEVEL effect ($F = .302$, $p = .585$) on NONACAD2. (See Table II.)

2.b. Does sex have an effect on non-academic self-

TABLE I

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: TOTAL2

Source	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Main Effects	3	77.713	8.248	.000
DAPLEVEL	1	17.484	1.856	.180
SEX	1	4.340	.461	.501
STARTSC	1	196.155	20.819	<.001
2-Way Interactions	3	15.154	1.603	.201
DAPLEVEL x SEX	1	33.201	3.524	.067
DAPLEVEL x STARTSC	1	7.853	.834	.366
SEX x STARTSC	1	8.705	.924	.342
3-Way Interactions	1	13.016	1.382	.246
DAPLEVEL x SEX x STARTSC	1	13.016	1.382	.246
Explained	7	41.659	4.422	.001
Residual	43	9.422		
Total	50	13.935		

TABLE II

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: NONACAD2

Source	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Main Effects	3	52.086	5.525	.003
DAPLEVEL	1	2.850	.302	.585
SEX	1	3.649	.387	.537
STARTSC	1	125.871	13.351	.001
2-Way Interactions	3	12.446	1.320	.280
DAPLEVEL x SEX	1	33.648	3.569	.066
DAPLEVEL x STARTSC	1	9.069	.962	.332
SEX x STARTSC	1	.310	.033	.857
3-Way Interactions	1	19.830	2.103	.154
DAPLEVEL x SEX x STARTSC	1	19.830	2.103	.154
Explained	7	30.490	3.234	.008
Residual	43	9.428		
Total	50	12.376		

concept? Results indicated there was no significant SEX effect (F =.387, p =.537) on NONACAD2. A nearly significant interaction effect between DAPLEVEL and SEX (F =3.569, p = .066) on NONACAD2 was indicated. (See Table II.)

2.c. Does starting self-concept have an effect on non-academic self-concept? Results indicated a significant STARTSC effect (F =13.351, p =.001) on NONACAD2. (See Table II.)

A 3-way analysis of variance was performed on ACADEM2 scores with DAPLEVEL, SEX, and STARTSC scores as factors to address the research questions 3.a., 3.b., and 3.c.

3.a. Does classroom type have an effect on academic self-concept? Results indicated a significant DAPLEVEL effect (F =5.367, p =.025) on ACADEM2. (See Table III.)

3.b. Does sex have an effect on academic self-concept? Results indicated there was no significant SEX effect (F =.189, p=.666) on ACADEM2. (See Table III.)

3.c. Does starting self-concept have an effect on academic self-concept? Results indicated a significant STARTSC effect (F =17.131, p<.001) on ACADEM2. (See Table III.)

The intercorrelation matrix run on TOTAL2, NONACAD2, and ACADEM2 with teacher demographic variables showed that total scores on the Primary Teacher Questionnaire were negatively correlated with total number of years teaching (r = -.439, p<.01) and number of years teaching in second grade (r = -.2932, p<.05).

TABLE III

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: ACADEM2

Source	d.f.	M.S.	F	F-prob
Main Effects	3	128.495	7.556	.000
DAPLEVEL	1	91.275	5.367	.025
SEX	1	3.207	.189	.666
STARTSC	1	291.325	17.131	<.001
2-Way Interactions	3	19.636	1.155	.338
DAPLEVEL x SEX	1	32.572	1.915	.174
DAPLEVEL x STARTSC	1	4.799	.282	.598
SEX x STARTSC	1	23.273	1.369	.249
3-Way Interactions	1	7.186	.423	.519
DAPLEVEL x SEX x STARTSC	1	7.186	.423	.519
Explained	7	64.512	3.794	.003
Residual	43	17.006		
Total	50	23.656		

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

This study indicated that different dimensions of self-concept in young children appear to be affected by two variables: 1.classroom type which in this study was determined by teacher beliefs; 2.starting total self-concept. The findings and conclusions will be organized by addressing the research questions found in Chapter One.

Total Self-Concept

The data indicated that classroom type (higher vs. lower endorsement teacher groups) and sex of the child had no significant effect on total self-concept, while starting self-concept appeared to have a significant effect. Children who started with a lower total self-concept score also ended with a lower total self-concept score. Children who started with a higher total self-concept score also ended with a higher self-concept score. These findings suggest that the total self-concept of young children is relatively stable.

The data also indicated that there was a nearly .067 significant interaction effect of level of teacher endorsement by sex of child on total self-concept. Males in classrooms where teacher beliefs endorsed more developmentally appropriate practices had a higher total self-concept mean score than males in classrooms where teacher beliefs showed a lower endorsement of developmentally appropriate practices. While firm conclusions may not be drawn from this particular finding, future studies focusing on the interaction of teacher endorsement and sex on total self-

concept might prove interesting.

Nonacademic Self-Concept

In this study nonacademic self-concept did not appear to be affected by classroom type determined by teacher beliefs. This is not surprising because this dimension of self-concept relates to many descriptions of self apart from the classroom, i.e., parental relationships, physical appearance, physical ability. Thus, one would expect that classroom type would have little effect on this non-classroom oriented construct.

Sex also had no significant effect on nonacademic self-concept of the children in this study. This finding supports the findings of Marsh, Craven, and Debus (1991) who also found no effects of sex when nonacademic self-concept was measured in children 5 to 8 years of age. The present finding further supports the idea that if sex does affect some dimensions of self-concept these effects are lost when dimensions are combined to assess total scores such as nonacademic self-concept.

Starting self-concept had a significant effect on nonacademic self-concept. Once again this suggests the stability of this dimension of self-concept in young children.

The interaction of level of teacher endorsement and sex of child had a nearly significant effect on nonacademic self-concept. One must be careful to conclude anything from this finding but it does invite more research in this area.

Academic Self-Concept

A very significant finding in this study was the effect of classroom type on academic self-concept. The data clearly indicated that the level of teacher endorsement of developmentally appropriate practices had a significant effect on academic self-concept scores. Children in classrooms of teachers who had higher levels of endorsement had higher academic self-concept scores than children in classrooms of teachers who had lower levels of endorsement. Because teacher beliefs are assumed to be congruent with classroom practices, the present finding suggests that a learning environment which is child-centered and is created with the philosophy that learning is an interactive process has a more enhancing effect on the construct of academic self-concept than a more traditional learning environment which is teacher-centered and created with the philosophy that learning is a passive process. In a developmentally appropriate environment children direct their own learning through child-initiated, child-directed activities which are teacher-supported. It seems natural that this ownership of learning based on the child's own interests would result in the child feeling very good about himself/herself as a learner. When teachers take advantage of children's interests, abilities, and enthusiasm for learning by allowing those children to interact with an environment that is rich in developmentally appropriate materials they are providing opportunities for young children to explore, think, and construct new meanings and understandings. Because self-

concept is constructed as a result of interactions with the environment it appears that academic self-concept is enhanced when classroom teachers have a high level of endorsement of developmentally appropriate practices. Through the learning environments they create early childhood educators have the opportunity to impact children's construction of academic self-concept.

According to the data sex of the child did not have an effect on academic self-concept, which further supports prior research in this area.

Once again, starting self-concept appeared to have a significant effect on yet another dimension of self-concept, academic self-concept. Because starting self-concept was a consistently significant factor in all dimensions of self-concept in this study, its importance cannot be ignored. Children starting with lower initial total self-concept scores had lower subsequent academic self-concept scores. This presents a challenge for early childhood educators who do not have control over many factors that impact the construction of a child's multidimensional self-concept. Children come to a teacher having had a vast number of interactions with settings such as home and previous school or classroom environments. Likewise, a child's physical appearance and abilities are often factors over which classroom teachers have little control. Because self-concept is a multidimensional construct educators should consider those dimensions they <u>can</u> impact.

This study indicates that early childhood educators can

have an impact on the dimension of academic self-concept in young children. By believing that an educational environment should take optimum advantage of children's natural abilities, interests, and enthusiasm for learning, the classroom teacher as the creator of the learning environment can enhance how children perceive themselves as learners.

Teacher Demographic Variables

The inverse relationship between number of years taught and endorsement of developmentally appropriate practice bears mentioning. In 1986 David Elkind described the trend in early childhood programs as being an emphasis on formal instruction of academic skills through a teacher-centered learning environment. In response to this trend and a growing body of research affirming that the trend was based on misconceptions about early learning, The National Association for the Education of Young Children issued a position statement on developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs in 1986. In 1987 an expanded edition was published which included appropriate practice in programs serving children from birth through age 8. From this time line it is fair to describe developmentally appropriate practice as a relatively new educational trend. Given the findings of the present study it appears teachers who have taught for an extended time (prior to 1986) may be continuing to endorse the more traditional, teacher-centered philosophy of educational practice more so than teachers who have been teaching for a shorter period of time. This may be due to a number of reasons including educational background,

district staff development programs, and personal educational development practices. A teacher who has been in the classroom for 20 years without taking any early childhood education courses since 1986-87 and does not regularly review research in the area of early childhood education may have very little working knowledge in the area of developmentally appropriate practice. The implications for individual school district staff development programs are apparent. There is a need for staff development programs focusing on developmentally appropriate practices.

Further Study

This study had a small sample from one school district. Future studies should involve larger samples including children from all primary grades rather than one as was the case in the present study. A larger sample across districts would result in findings which might more easily allow for generalizations beyond the specific sample.

Three dimensions of self-concept were investivaged in the present study. Future studies might include additional dimensions, particularly those which contribute to the larger construct of academic self-concept, e.g.,how children view themselves as writers, how children view themselves as problem solvers. Which dimensions of academic self-concept appear to be most affected by a developmentally appropriate learning environment? Are the findings of this study supportive of previous studies which indicate that sex does affect some dimensions of academic self-concept i.e., math self-concept, reading self-concept?

The present study indicated that teacher belief does affect the construct of academic self-concept in young children. Additional studies could investigate the relationship of these two factors on student achievement.

Alternative analyses of the data from the present study could result in more significant findings. In particular, multiple analysis of variance would provide a better examination of the data.

As early childhood educators continue to refocus on what children should be doing rather than on what children can be doing, it is apparent that they, too, must consider what they are doing as creators of the learning environment. While this study indicates that the dimension of academic self-concept is impacted by teacher beliefs in develpmentally appropriate practice, further studies in this area may increase the understanding of this relationship.

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APPENDIX

PRIMARY TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find how much you endorse a number of statements about early childhood education. This is not a test; there are no right or wrong answers. You are asked to give your honest opinion of the degree to which you agree with these statements.

Record your answers on the Answer Sheet provided. Please be certain you respond to every question and that you leave no blanks. Make no marks on the Questionnaire itself, only on the Answer Sheet.

Read each statement carefully and then answer

A) if you strongly disagree with the statement

B) if you somewhat disagree with the statement

C) if you somewhat agree with the statement

D) if you strongly agree with the statement.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Dr. Kenneth E. Smith
University of Nebraska at Omaha
(c)
1991

PRIMARY GRADES TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

A) STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
B) SOMEWHAT DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
C) SOMEWHAT AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
D) STRONGLY AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT

1. The child is best viewed in terms of a group norm determined by chronological age and grade level.

2. Curriculum should respond primarily to grade level expectations.

3. The school should be organized so that the individual teacher integrates instruction across the areas of the curriculum.

4. Instruction should consist mainly of reading groups, whole-group activities, and seat work.

5. In the child's acquisition of literacy, the teacher's role should be to guide children toward an increasing competence primarily through individual approaches.

6. Curriculum should primarily facilitate the child's meeting of group expectations as defined by grade level.

7. The teacher's primary goal regarding children's behavior should be to establish and maintain teacher classroom control.

8. A child's progress should be reported relative to the performance of other children within grade level.

9. Teachers should deal with parents mainly through formally scheduled meetings and conferences.

A) STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
B) SOMEWHAT DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
C) SOMEWHAT AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
D) STRONGLY AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT

10. Learning materials should be symbolic and representational.

11. Instruction should be clearly divided into separate subject areas.

12. Curriculum should respond primarily to individual differences in ability and interest.

13. Teacher preparation time should be used primarily to prepare the materials used in seatwork and teacher-assigned activities.

14. Learning materials should be concrete and relevant to the child's life.

15. Instruction should consist mainly of projects, learning centers, and play managed primarily by children.

16. Children with special needs should receive special instruction outside the regular classroom whenever possible.

17. Opportunities for work-focused peer social interaction should predominate over whole-group and individual experience.

18. Staff assignments in the primary grades should be available only to teachers with specialized training in early childhood education.

19. For most of the time children should be encouraged to work cooperatively in informal small groups.

A) STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
B) SOMEWHAT DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
C) SOMEWHAT AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
D) STRONGLY AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT

20. Grades are a better motivator of children than is the acquisition of competence.

21. Children should be retained or placed in a transition grade if they have not mastered basic skills at grade level.

22. Teacher observation is the most valid way to monitor children's performance.

23. Children should be allowed to use space flexibly to pursue a variety of learning activities alone or in small groups.

24. The most effective way to organize instruction is to have a class size large enough to allow for efficient whole-group approaches.

25. Teacher preparation time should be used primarily to prepare the physical learning environment for hands-on activities.

26. Teachers should deal with parents mainly informally, encouraging them to participate in the school, classroom, and at home.

27. Children should move at their own pace in acquiring important skills in areas such as reading and math.

28. Teachers can most effectively promote children's social-emotional development by consistently using rewards and praise to give feedback about the appropriateness of children's behavior.

29. The classroom group should vary frequently in size and age range depending on the needs of the children.

A) **STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT**
B) **SOMEWHAT DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT**
C) **SOMEWHAT AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT**
D) **STRONGLY AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT**

30. The classroom group should be determined primarily by chronological age and should vary little after the beginning of the school year.

31. In the child's acquisition of literacy, the teacher's role should be to diagnose and correct errors in a specified body of subject matter content and skills.

32. A test is the most valid way to monitor children's performance.

33. Teachers can most effectively promote children's social-emotional development by allowing peers to interact to make cooperative choices among appropriate activities.

34. Children should be expected to keep pace with the group in acquiring important skills in areas such as reading and math.

35. For most of the time children should be expected to work quietly on their own and in teacher-led small groups.

36. Primarily, teachers should motivate children's behavior through the careful use of rewards and punishments in the classroom.

37. Curriculum and instruction should primarily develop the child's individual self-esteem, sense of competence, and positive feelings towards learning.

38. The child is best viewed as a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth and development.

39. Curriculum should be primarily designed to develop the intellectual domain, stressing the acquisition of carefully defined discreet skills.

A) STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
B) SOMEWHAT DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
C) SOMEWHAT AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT
D) STRONGLY AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT

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40. Primarily, teachers should build on children's internal motivation.

41. Staff assignments in the primary grades should be available to any teacher with elementary certification.

42. Children should be assigned permanent personal space such as a desk where they are expected to work quietly by themselves.